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Good afternoon. Today is report card day – you know, the day when senior management humbly takes a chair in the front of the room and reports out to you on the accomplishments of the past year – measuring the success of the last twelve months. It’s also the day when we articulate plans for the coming year or, in our case, 300 days – whichever comes first! (As an aside, one of the things I’ve learned during my tenure here is that while a calendar year is 365 days, an EPA year is 300 days. Now that’s the type of math I can appreciate!)

We are here to talk about another successful year – regardless of how many days were counted. General and President Dwight Eisenhower once said, “We succeed only as we identify in life, or in war, or in anything else, a single overriding objective, and make all other considerations bend to that one objective.”

That characterizes our approach as much as anything else – we have a singular purpose in our commitment to protect human health and the environment, and that purpose guides and shapes everything we do.

In summing it up, I can tell you that we had another good year, and our management team will share with you our accomplishments and our goals for the next year. You can also view the entire 300-day plan and accomplishments on the Region 2 intranet.

Before I turn over the microphone to our division directors, however, I want to talk to you about my seven goals and associated priorities.

For me, this has been a most satisfying two-and-a-half years, filled with accomplishments, none of which would have come to pass without your support, your commitment and your passion.

When I was sworn in as Regional Administrator in September, 2005, I couldn't imagine a more challenging and satisfying position – and, today, I am even more convinced that this has been the ideal job. I have never been indebted to more quality people and, if I had the time, I'd mention every one of you - unfortunately, time suggests otherwise. Suffice it to say that I would match your professionalism and commitment with any other group of individuals in the federal government, and I am most fortunate to have served with you.

Not long after joining Region 2, I established seven action goals and have since added a number of priority items to the list. These goals and

priorities will, in some form, shape my legacy, and provide a framework in which to judge my tenure.

All of them have equal weight and each represents a critical regional issue.

The first is the cleanup of the Hudson River General Electric Superfund site. I think we have made great strides in the last few years, including the present completion of the Fort Edward dewatering facility, and we are now anticipating the start of Phase 1 dredging in 2009. The Hudson River General Electric superfund site is one of the largest superfund sites in the United States, and its proposed cleanup is one of the greatest challenges EPA has and will continue to face.

Another goal was the renewal of the New York City Filtration Avoidance Determination. The execution of the renewal document in New York City in 2007 will stand as an important moment in the history of Region 2 and the City. I look forward during my remaining tenure to the City finalizing the details of the UltraViolet treatment facility.

The finalization of decisions and enforcement instruments needed to complete a comprehensive cleanup of Lake Onondaga was another of my goals, and I am confident we are moving in a very positive direction with this beautiful and historic lake and its various sub-sites. The Lake has special

meaning to the Onondaga Nation and the people of central New York. An environmentally clean Lake Onondaga can provide recreational opportunities and sustenance, and its restoration is imperative.

State Implementation Plans for New York and New Jersey were also high on my list of priorities. The newly issued federal air quality standards require that the state plans be in compliance with the new measures and I am hopeful that before I leave EPA in January, 2009, these SIP plans will be well on their way to finalization.

I was literally shocked early in my tenure when I visited Puerto Rico for the first time as Regional Administrator. I couldn't believe how devastated the environment was from its pattern of poor infrastructure and non-compliant solid waste practices. The citizens of the Commonwealth deserve so much better, and we bore down heavily on the authorities to change that dynamic.

We issued orders to close five non-compliant landfills and mounted a waste-to-energy campaign highlighted by a highly successful waste-to-energy conference. This spring we are co-sponsoring a recycling conference, and I intend to do everything in my power to influence the authorities to continue to keep the environment of the Commonwealth foremost in their decision making. The good news in this regard is that the Commonwealth

Solid Waste Management Authority has drafted a waste management plan that calls for the Commonwealth to take additional landfill closure actions in the future.

That leaves the Passaic River, a body of water that is probably the most polluted in the nation. I have heard the Passaic described as the “poor man’s Hudson,” and the “river of the working class.” Whatever term or phrase best describes the Passaic, it is vital that we begin cleaning it up. Again, I think we have made good progress recently – putting into action measures that will help select an early action alternative for the lower eight miles and a negotiated settlement with the Passaic Valley Sewer Commission.

I have three other areas of priority focus – the World Trade Center remediation program, the Port of New York and New Jersey, and counseling power companies on compliance and alternative energy sources.

In terms of lower Manhattan, I am determined that by the end of the summer we will have completed our test and clean program for requesting units. In addition, I look forward to our acceptance of abatement plans for Fiterman Hall.

This past September, I hosted the 2nd Annual EPA Regional Leadership Forum, at which the Agency ratified its vision and outlined its

strategy for Sustainable Ports. This meeting followed the 2006 Ports Conference in California, and it was a remarkable success. Here, in Region 2, we have a close working relationship with the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey and have been making very substantial inroads in limiting port emissions and creating an overall environmental awareness on the part of those who operate and use the ports.

With regard to power companies, one of the highlights of my tenure has been the PSEG Hudson County plant enforcement action. Working with regional utilities to limit their impact on the environment and to encourage them to explore and expand their use of alternative energy sources will continue to fill an important portion of my day.

It is obvious to me that our utilities will be turning to nuclear power as a vital source of “green” energy in the future. It is essential that we support and help guide their initiatives. You may have heard me talk about nuclear waste and the fact that we need a national solution to the burgeoning quantities of radioactive waste at our power plants and other storage facilities – like West Valley in New York State. All of this waste needs a place to go and the solution is right in front of us – the Department of Energy’s Yucca Mountain radioactive waste repository. The sooner we get

the repository on-line and operational, the sooner we can deal with the waste associated with this vital power source.

Paraphrasing the President, “I think the state of our union is fine.” We are a thousand or so strong, and we speak for millions more in our efforts to create a cleaner and healthier environment. I want to personally thank all of you for your support and hard work over the past year, and I expect you will all give your very best to continue to protect the environment and human health in years to come.